

Kentucky Teacher

September 2006

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

www.education.ky.gov

Suzanne Wright
First-year Highly Skilled Educator
7.5 years in the elementary classroom



Nearly two-thirds of Kentucky public schools make Adequate Yearly Progress

By Lisa Gross

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Data released by the Kentucky Department of Education on Aug. 11 show that 65.8 percent, or 766, of Kentucky's 1,187 public schools met 100 percent of their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in the 2005-2006 school year for the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Of the 398 schools that did not make AYP, 241 made 80 percent or more of their goals.

AYP is the term used in the federal law to refer to the minimum improvement required of each school and district over the course of one year. It is determined at the school and district levels by:

- Measuring growth in the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in reading and mathematics
- Assessing improvement on the "other academic indicator." For elementary and middle schools, the indicator is the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System performance judgment. For high schools, the indicator is the graduation rate.
- Testing at least 95 percent of enrolled students and student subpopulations of sufficient size

AYP results for Kentucky schools are based on the Kentucky Core Content Tests' (KCCT) items in reading and mathematics — testing in grades 3 through 8 and in grades 10 and 11 at least once in reading and mathematics. Schools are required to have specific percentages of students reaching proficiency or above in reading and mathematics each year and to meet other criteria listed above in order to make AYP.

NCLB mandates that schools and districts be held accountable for the progress

of subgroups in reading and mathematics. Each Kentucky school and district has a specific number of NCLB goals to meet in order to make AYP.

The Kentucky Board of Education has established the goal of proficiency by 2014 for each grade level. In the meantime, schools and districts must reach the statewide Annual Measurable Objective for reading and mathematics in order to achieve AYP.

Signed into law in January 2002, NCLB also requires states to provide information about the progress of schools and districts toward proficiency by 2014. Each state uses its own standards and assessments to make the annual determinations.

Kentucky used data from the 2005 and 2006 administrations of the KCCT to provide 2006 AYP information for schools and districts. During the 2006 assessment, Kentucky used an augmented norm-referenced test (NRT) as a one-year solution to include the grades not currently assessed in reading and mathematics through the KCCT.

Because of flexibility allowed by the federal government in the Wellstone Amendment, the augmented test was administered but not used to calculate AYP. Kentucky calculated AYP for schools and districts using

See NEARLY on Page 9

Good nutrition and learning go hand in hand

By Joy Barr

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Research shows that good nutritional habits are important to the physical development and cognitive performance of students. Making sure students know those good habits and receive the balanced meals they need are responsibilities that Janey Thornton and her 150 employees in the Hardin County Schools Child Nutrition Services Department take seriously — every day, every meal.

As director of school food service and nutrition, Thornton oversees the operation of the district's breakfast, lunch and summer meal service programs and after-school snacks. Her department also oper-

See GOOD on Page 9



Photo by Rick McComb

Building relationships from the start

Lori Shelton, right, life science teacher at the Muhlenberg South High School Freshman Academy, helps freshman Heather Daniel learn to work the combination to her assigned locker during the academy's orientation program in early August. Teachers on the two Freshman Academy teaching teams work to build relationships that help ease the transition into high school, and help students be more successful in classes and take more responsibility for their learning. (See Page 4.)

Board learns about 2007 assessments

By Cathy Lindsey

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At its August meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education heard from a representative of Measured Progress, Kentucky's new prime contractor for state assessments. Tim Crockett, assistant vice president of the company, updated the board on the status of work on the state assessments that will be administered in spring 2007.

Crockett informed the board that Measured Progress worked with Kentucky Department of Education staff this past April to develop and field test assessment items needed to meet the increased demand for Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) items aligned to the recently revised Kentucky Core Content. A large-scale field test

of writing prompts for open-response questions is scheduled for September in grades 5 and 8.

He explained that the first test administration under the contract will occur in November with 12th-grade writing. In the spring of 2007, the implementation of the full KCCT will occur with virtually all work processed at Measured Progress' new location in Louisville.

Kentucky Department of Education staff presented policy issues and possible options for the board to consider as it prepares for changes in state regulations that will be necessary to implement changes in Kentucky's accountability system.

The board approved changes in 2006 for some components of the state testing system

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Bulletin Board



Photo by Rick McComb

Spencer County Elementary

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr
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Conferences

Safe schools

The 12th annual Safe Schools — Successful Students conference is set for Oct. 2-3 at the Galt House East in Louisville.

www.kysafeschools.org

Art education

The Kentucky Art Education Association's conference is set for Oct. 13-14 at the Owensboro 5/6 Elementary Center in Owensboro. The conference will offer core content-related lesson plans, classroom ideas, hands-on workshops and six professional development credit hours each day.

www.kyaea.org

Gifted convention

The National Association for Gifted Children has set Nov. 1-5 for its 53rd annual convention in Charlotte, N.C. "Reaching for Rigor and Relevance" is the theme.

www.nagc.org

KYSPRA

The Kentucky School Public Relations Association will hold its annual fall summit Nov. 2-3 at the Sloan Convention Center in Bowling Green.

Contact: Don Sergeant, (270) 781-5150, don.sergeant@warren.kyschools.us

Events

High Attendance Day is Sept. 12

The Kentucky Directors of Pupil Personnel is sponsoring a "High Attendance Day" for all Kentucky schools on Sept. 12.

The elementary, middle and high school with the highest percentage attendance on Sept. 12 will each win T-shirts commemorating the achievement. The schools also will be awarded \$500.

www.kasa.org/KDPP/HighAttendanceDay.html

American Education Week

"Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility" is the theme for this year's American Education Week, which will be celebrated Nov. 12-18. An online toolkit with a variety of classroom activities is available for downloading.

www.nea.org/aew/history.html

Kids Safe Online

The second annual Kids Safe Online, a national Webcast, will take place Oct. 4. The Webcast — geared for fourth and fifth graders — is held in recognition of National Cyber Security Awareness Month and will feature interactive skits to help children learn more about cyber security and how to be safe when using computers and the Internet.

To view the Webcast and related material, visit www.msiasac.org and click on National Webcast Initiative.

Thoroughbred Center productions

The Thoroughbred Center in Lexington has several upcoming productions that are appropriate for school field trips. Performances are at 10 a.m. and noon.

"The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" is a musical depict-

ing this hero of the Revolutionary War. Suggested for grades 5 and up. Performances are Oct. 16-17.

"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" is a musical adaptation of the classic fairy tale. Suggested for grades K-5. Performances are Nov. 9-10.

Contact: Box Office, (859) 293-1853

www.thethoroughbredcenter.com

Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program arranges direct one-to-one classroom exchanges to more than 30 countries for elementary and secondary teachers, as well as two-year and four-year college educators. Administrators can participate in six-week shadowing experiences in nine countries. The application deadline is Oct. 16 for the 2007-2008 academic year.

www.fulbrightexchanges.org

Arts showcases

The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts will host artists and exhibitors from across the country at its annual Arts Education Showcases in October. The one-day events, held at locations around the state, will familiarize Kentucky educators and parents with performing artists, visual artists, arts organizations and cultural institutions that are available as resources for their schools.

Showcases are scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at:

- Madisonville, Glema Mahr Center, Oct. 4
- Somerset, Center for Rural Development, Oct. 5
- Lexington, Singletary Center, Oct. 9

Contact: Shannon Levine, (502) 562-0118, slevine@kentuckycenter.org

www.kentuckycenter.org/education

Resources

Online calendar

Do you want to keep track of important professional development opportunities, conferences and other education events? Do you have an event of statewide interest you want to promote?

Then, visit the Kentucky Department of Education's Master Calendar of Events on the Internet. Educators and the general public can access the online calendar, which shows events that have been submitted by department staff and other organizations.

Contact: JoAnna Crim, (502) 564-3421, joanna.crim@education.ky.gov

www.education.ky.gov and click on "Calendars"

TheTeacherCenter.org

TheTeacherCenter.org is a free online resource from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to help prospective, new and experienced teachers obtain or maintain their teaching credentials.

TheTeacherCenter.org is designed as a "one-stop shop" of online resources to help educators find information relevant to the teaching profession and to aid them in meeting continuing education requirements.

The Web site includes information on becoming a teacher, testing services, professional development, financial assistance, job searches and much more. The site also provides information about requirements for highly qualified status in each SREB-member state.

Visit www.theteachercenter.org to create a personalized account and get more details on the service.

Commissioner's Comments

KIDS will be 21st century instructional planning tool

By Gene Wilhoit

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I think you'll agree that education is in a constant state of change. But in many respects — and despite the fact that we are teaching students who have grown up in a very different world — today's educators are largely using the same tools and methods that our own teachers used to instruct us.

Today's students have cell phones and send text messages. Their first games were computer games. Many have their own Web sites and blogs or post information and photos on Web sites like MySpace.com. There is a digital, hi-def, immediate gratification world.

The opportunity facing Kentucky teachers and administrators is how to work smarter at being 21st century educators. I believe the first step is for educators to cast aside outdated methods and use the tools of the future to do our work.

The Kentucky Department of Education is working to make some of those 21st century tools available to you in a robust new technology system that will help support 21st century learners!

Last year, Kentucky became one of only 14 states selected by the federal Department of Education to receive a three-year grant to design, develop and implement a statewide longitudinal data system. Being recognized as a national leader in education reform and a leader in utilizing cutting-edge education technology, Kentucky was able to garner the largest award — \$5.8 million — given to any state.

The intent of the grant is to help states, including Kentucky, meet the reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. We plan to meet those requirements, but also to use this opportunity to create a foundation for a much more instructionally focused system.

The teachers and Kentucky Department of Education staff working on this project are very excited about how Kentucky will be able to build around this system to provide assistance to teachers and administrators in moving students to higher levels. Their vision is to provide Kentucky educators with a user-friendly tool to access information that will inform their delivery of individualized instruction to every student.

It's KIDS

We've named the system KIDS (Kentucky Instructional Data System), and it will be a 21st century tool that provides a window into student learning — both past performance and future goals — and offers a storehouse of education information. Educators throughout the state will have at their fingertips key learning indicators to

track improvement at all grade levels and for all students over time.

KIDS will support decision-making at the state, district, school and classroom levels. This data collection and analysis tool also will be available to a variety of stakeholders to aid student academic improvement.



Wilhoit

Student information from sources like the Student Information System and the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) will help you develop a picture of an individual student's education on a longitudinal basis. You will be able to watch the progress of a student's career unfold year by year on your computer screen.

This technology tool will save you steps and time. It will no longer be necessary to make an appointment to see student files in the counselor's office, leave your desk to get the information, spend time shuffling papers and pulling out the pertinent information or talking with a student's past teachers for anecdotal information.

The information you need to individualize student instruction will be available to you 24/7. Just as easily as you find items on Google and Amazon.com Web sites, you'll be able to access information from your school computer or the comfort of your home.

Helping John Doe

For instance, imagine that John Doe is a transfer student to your classroom from another Kentucky school district. After his first few days in class, you know he's not keeping up with the rest of the class.

Once KIDS is operational, you will have access to and be able to view his academic record via your computer. You'll be able to look at his past assessment results at the school, district and state levels to find John's competencies and where he needs more assistance. If he's attended school in a third or fourth school or district, you will be able to access that information also.

You'll be able to determine what type of learner John is. You will see what classroom programs have helped him most in the past and decide what types of instruction might help him achieve at higher levels. And, you'll be able to use this information to talk with John and his parents about his learning and your instructional plans for moving him toward proficiency. At some point, students and parents will be able to access certain information via KIDS to give them feedback on the student's progress.

Tool for administrators

KIDS is more than a classroom tool.

This system will accumulate information at the student, classroom, school, district and state levels — making it a valuable tool for school and district leaders. Access to data from the MUNIS financial program will give administrators up-to-date information on school and district funding, budgeting and a variety of state-required reports.

If a school is not meeting its assessment goals, KIDS will provide "one-stop shopping" for much of the information the faculty needs to analyze the school's academic progress and create its plan for improvement. Administrators can use this information alongside the funding and budget reports to make decisions that address school and district needs.

As I mentioned earlier, a really exciting part of KIDS is what we will be building around it to help teachers address individual student learning needs. An extension of KIDS, which we're calling the Knowledge Management Portal (KMP), won't be completed for some time. However, teachers already have access to our initial efforts to provide instructional resources, the "Teaching Tools" section on the department's Web site (www.education.ky.gov).

Once a teacher has information on a learner, he or she will be able to submit a query through KMP to find instructional resources specific to that learner's needs. Similar to the "Teaching Tools" currently on our Web site, teachers will find curriculum documents, instructional resources, standards-based units of study and banks of content-specific test items. Basically, teachers will find a wealth of resources to remediate learning by adjusting instruction

for each student.

In addition, teachers will have an online community to communicate and collaborate with one another about instruction. We plan to make it easier for a social studies teacher in northern Kentucky to work — and even share lessons — with a social studies teacher in southeastern Kentucky.

And, these two teachers would be able to collaborate online with a language arts teacher in western Kentucky and a music teacher in central Kentucky. The possibilities for statewide collaboration across the content areas are limitless!

We also plan for teachers to be able to use the KMP to find professional development opportunities and link to stakeholders with similar concerns and interests. Calendars, threaded discussions and online workspaces with Instant Messaging will help teachers share information with one another no matter where they are located in the state.

This may seem a grand plan, but we are well into the first year of designing KIDS. The 2006 legislature has provided funding to upgrade school technology and give teachers better classroom connections by the time KIDS is ready to launch.

As the development of KIDS progresses over the next two and a half years and the new technology components are put in place, I feel confident that Kentucky teachers and administrators truly will be making instructional decisions using 21st century planning tools.

(To comment on this topic, contact Commissioner Gene Wilhoit at gene.wilhoit@education.ky.gov.)



Photo by Rick McComb

Brittany Pogue, early primary teacher at Greenville Elementary (Muhlenberg County), prepares class work for this school year from a computer in the school library during a summer professional development session. Once the Kentucky Instructional Data System (KIDS) is operational, teachers and administrators will have a technology tool to develop a picture of an individual student's education on a longitudinal basis and to better individualize instruction.

Freshman Academy eases transition in rural Muhlenberg County school

By Carrie Clark and Allen Hunley
Muhlenberg South High School

Whether a student lives in an urban or rural area, incoming freshmen face the same problems nationwide. Some of these problems include: anxiety on entering a new school, social pressure, increased academic pressure and increased responsibility.

Consequently, the concept of a freshman academy has been introduced in many larger schools to offset these issues. And, in many cases schools receive federal grants to implement such academies. However, the grants do not target rural schools.

Five years ago, the faculty at Muhlenberg South High School in rural Greenville was faced with how to implement such a program in our small school. As a faculty, we had noticed many of our freshmen were becoming discontent with school. This, in turn, led to increased absenteeism, more discipline problems, declining test scores and an overall negative attitude toward school.

After a pilot program with a random sample of students showed positive results, it was decided to implement a version of a freshman academy at Muhlenberg South High School.

Muhlenberg South has approximately 700 students in grades 9-12. About 200 of those 700 students are incoming freshmen. We lacked the facilities to have a school-within-a-school, so we modified our traditional 4x4 block schedule to isolate our incoming freshmen from the upperclassmen for half of each school day.

We divided two consecutive 90-minute blocks into four 42-minute class periods. All incoming freshmen have their four core classes (mathematics, social studies, science, and English) during these 42-minute periods all year. The other two 90-minute blocks are used for elective classes (two per semester).

During the rotation through their core academic classes, freshmen are not in the hallway with upperclassmen, thus isolating them for half of the day. During the remainder of the day, freshmen are exposed to our traditional block schedule. They

change classes alongside the rest of the student body, experience 90-minute, one-semester classes and potentially have classes with upperclassmen.

The eight academy teachers approach the core academic classes modeling a middle school team approach. They have common planning to help utilize this middle school team approach. During this time, academy teachers have opportunities to com-

"...we modified our traditional 4x4 block schedule to isolate our incoming freshmen from the upperclassmen for half of each school day."

municate with each other, plan integrated instruction and meet with parents.

Because academy teachers have the same group of students, the freshman schedule becomes very flexible. It is modified to accommodate tests, lab exercises, school assemblies and club meetings throughout the year.

of their fears about walking into the building on that first day of school.

During the first week of school, all incoming freshmen take the Iowa Test of Educational Development. The results of this standardized basic skills test are used in conjunction with previous assessment data — along with parental involvement — to ensure proper placement of students in their core academic classes. If needed, schedules are modified.

This data also is used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each student. A remediation program is then developed for each student to address his or her weaknesses.

Each academy teacher is responsible for a small group of students and provides individual support using computer programs, small group instruction and peer tutors to meet the needs of each student. The schedule is modified throughout the year to allow time to improve basic skills.

In an effort to improve attendance and discipline, the Muhlenberg South academy holds a reward day at the end of each grading period. To qualify for reward day activities, students must meet attendance and discipline requirements set by academy teachers. Students in compliance get



Photos by Rick McComb

Physics and chemistry teacher Allen Hunley, standing, talks with students, parents and teachers during orientation for the Freshman Academy at Muhlenberg South High School in early August.

academy classes are dramatically different when compared to their non-academy classes. Teachers at Muhlenberg South feel the shorter classroom periods and modified passing time between classes may account for the decrease in discipline infractions.

Teachers in the building but not associated with the academy also have started noticing a positive difference in students. During the initial implementation of the academy, some teachers doubted the merits of isolating freshmen for part of the day. However, many of those teachers now see a distinct difference in the scholastic ability of Freshman Academy students.

"At first I was not convinced the Freshman Academy was working," said Algebra teacher Penny Charbonneau. "But now that I have these students in my classes, I can see a distinct difference in their retention levels."

At Muhlenberg South High School, we have taken the concept of a Freshman Academy and

adapted it to fit our school and students. We have operated the academy for four years without the aid of a grant or any outside financial resources.

The academy has proved to be successful in a number of ways. However, we are constantly evaluating and modifying it to meet the ever-changing needs of our student population. The academy at Muhlenberg South High School provides structure and a sense of belonging for incoming freshmen and eases their transition into high school. As a result, the academy has become an important component of our school.

(Carrie Clark and Allen Hunley are teachers at Muhlenberg South High School, in Muhlenberg County. Clark teaches mathematics, and Hunley is a science teacher. Both have been involved in the creation and implementation of the school's Freshman Academy.)



Carrie Clark, mathematics teacher and a member of the Freshman Academy teaching team, gives students information about activities and expectations for their first year in high school at Muhlenberg South High.

Approximately one week before school starts, we invite all incoming freshmen and their parents to school for orientation. The event gives students a chance to meet their new principals, counselors and teachers in an informal setting. We also feel it eases some

to attend holiday parties, movies shown at school, cookouts and field trips.

Freshman attendance rates average more than a percentage point higher than their upperclassman counterparts, and freshmen discipline infractions during

More info. . .

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Allen Hunley, (270) 338-9409, allen.hunley@muhlenberg.kyschools.us

HSE application posted online for 2007-2008 school year

The Kentucky Department of Education is looking for a few great educators to become members of the Highly Skilled Educator (HSE) Program. Application materials for the 2007-2008 school year can be downloaded from the department's Web site. The deadline to apply is Oct. 31, 2006.

The program seeks administrators and classroom teachers who are recognized leaders and who have shown high levels of professional competence in assisting schools with improving student achievement as outlined in Kentucky's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement. Applicants must hold Kentucky certification, have a minimum of five years' experience as an educator and be involved as an educator in the last three years, and have knowledge of current educational practice in Kentucky. Other criteria are listed on the Web site.

In addition to completing the application, applicants must submit a resume and four confidential references. Applicants who complete these steps by the Oct. 31 deadline will be invited to participate in the first step of the selection process, a written assessment. The selection process con-

tinues with performance events, background and reference checks, and site visits.

HSEs receive 135 percent of their current daily salary for 240 days of employment. Currently, beginning salaries are capped at \$90,000. HSEs work for the department through a one-year Memorandum of Agreement with their home districts. The agreement is renewable for a second year and may be renewed a third year.

This group of educators has been providing direct, long-term assistance to schools since 1994, first under the Distinguished Educators Program and now under the Highly Skilled Educators Program. More than 300 educators have been identified and trained to work with schools identified by the state assessment and accountability program as being in need of assistance.

MORE INFO . . .

Connie Lester, (502) 564-2116, connie.lester@education.ky.gov

www.education.ky.gov—Go to "KDE QuickLinks" and click. Select "Highly Skilled Educators" and click.

Take the Safe Schools pledge!

Kentucky's Safe Schools Week, Oct. 15-21, is a time for students, parents, educators and community members to realize that "Safe Schools Begin with Me!" This year, the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) invites everyone to sign the Online Pledge Against School Violence.

Those who sign the pledge will be able to print a certificate from their computers. Schools can use the certificates to create a "Wall Against Violence" or design a classroom competition for the highest number of pledges.

Safe Schools Week is a collaboration to broaden the scope of the week's activities and involve individuals who can make a difference. As a Newspapers in Education sponsor, KCSS has developed a Safe Schools Week newspaper supplement that will appear in newspapers throughout Kentucky Oct. 10 and reach more than 120,000 households and 1,500 classrooms in the state. The supplement includes classroom activities and materials that address issues like gun safety, bullying prevention, healthy choices, resiliency and drug abuse.

In addition, KCSS offers a variety of online resources and materials for parents, teachers and students to use throughout October. Those Web sites are listed in the box below.

MORE INFO . . .

Contact your local newspaper to find out how to get copies of the Safe Schools supplement for your classroom.

www.kycss.org/pledge — Pledge Against School Violence

www.kysafeschools.org/clear/ssweek/index.html — General information

www.kysafeschools.org/clear/ssweek/eventideas.html — Event ideas

www.kysafeschools.org/clear/ssw/handouts.html — Classroom handouts

www.kysafeschools.org/clear/ssw/competition.html — Be Healthy, Be Safe materials



Members of the Carr Creek Elementary STLP are interviewed about their community service project during the National Educational Computing Conference in San Diego, Ca., this past summer.

Photo submitted by Elaine Harrison, Office of Education Technology

STLP teams present at national event

Student teams from Carr Creek Elementary (Knott County), Mt. Sterling Elementary (Montgomery County) and Apollo High School (Daviess County) represented Kentucky's Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP™) at the Student Showcase Sessions during the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) July 7 in San Diego, Ca. The three schools qualified for the conference by being judged "The Best of Kentucky" during the 2006 Statewide STLP Student Showcase in Lexington on May 11.

Middle school students from Carr Creek Elementary, a K-8 school, demonstrated their project, "Community Service Super-STARs!" They created a walking rover-type robot and programmed it with mathematical, scientific and technology skills. The students gained a better understand-

ing of robotics while working on the project with community leaders from the Challenger Learning Center of Kentucky and American Electric Power.

The team from Mt. Sterling Elementary, a K-5 school, provided conference participants with information about "Technoblast 2005," to which students invited community residents to learn about technology and how to use it. They provided instruction in how to use video and still digital cameras, print photos, edit video, create a computer presentation, access the Internet, install and care for a computer, use word processing software and write letters, and produce digital music.

Apollo High School students discussed their student-run Help Desk Program, which last year resolved more than 1,000 technology problems in their school dis-

trict. The STLP students showed how the student Help Desk operates to provide support to the 400 laptops and 300 desktop computers used by students, staff and teachers.

During the conference closing, Kathy Schrock, creator of "Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators," showed two videos as examples of good student-produced work. The videos were produced by two Kentucky STLP schools, Elizabethtown High School (Elizabethtown Independent) and Robert Johnson Elementary (Ft. Thomas Independent). Schrock's guide is a Web site that helps teachers connect to Internet resources.

NECC is widely considered the most comprehensive educational technology event in the world for educators at all levels (Pre-K through college).

Kentucky Bluebird Society offers school program

Approximately 40 Kentucky schools participate in the Kentucky Bluebird Society's Outdoor Classroom Enrichment Program. This hands-on program, which received the 2005 Kentucky Association of Environmental Education's Award for Excellence in Environmental Education for fostering better grades, interesting more students in conservation and improving bluebird populations, is open to other schools.

The program's bluebird-nesting project is aligned with Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment and

can be included in teaching life cycles, mathematics, geography, art and more. The society assists teachers through its volunteer staff or by e-mail.

Schools can request up to five free bluebird boxes from the society. The organization also sells boxes with a built-in camera at a 50 percent discount to schools so students can observe nesting birds on indoor monitors. Now is the time to order boxes to install for the March 2007 nesting season.

Participating schools receive a free society membership, sub-

scription to the group's newsletter and a framed certificate recognizing the school's new bluebird "trail." Schools can submit examples of their project work for possible publication in the newsletter or on the society's Web site.

MORE INFO . . .

Ed Ray, Kentucky Bluebird Society, P.O. Box 3425, Paducah, KY 42002, edrayosprey@yahoo.com

www.biology.eku.edu/kybluebirds.html

Technology supports instruction and empowers students to learn

Kentucky educators are moving away from a “one-size-fits-all” approach to improving instruction and student learning. They realize that for students to be successful in the 21st century they need to develop the skills necessary to become lifelong learners.

The most successful educators realize that this requires a different approach to teaching and learning:

- Students must have opportunities to work together toward common goals.
- Teachers must serve as ‘experts,’ coaches and facilitators — and sometimes just get out of the way and let students discover things for themselves.

In schools throughout Kentucky, teachers are using technology to support the choices they make every step of the way to individualize instruction for their students. Technology provides an engaging environment where students can find relevant content, to “put it all together” and then share what they’ve learned with teachers, other students, parents and the world.

The increased availability of technology is widening and leveling the playing field for all students and ensuring that a high-level curriculum is accessible to all students. The profiles of learning projects on this page and Page 7 in the Graves and Pike County school districts are just two examples of the power of technology to support learning for all students.

Graves County Students benefit from ‘high school that never closes’

By Cathy Lindsey

cathy.lindsey@education.ky.gov

Imagine you’re in high school, the oldest of five children at age 18. You haven’t seen your father in years, and your mother is in jail. It’s up to you to support your siblings and keep the family together.

Your only choice is to drop out of school and go to work. Right?

Wrong! If you live in Graves County or one of the eight surrounding counties served by Gateway Academy High School, you have options. You can enroll in the high school and earn your diploma at your own pace and on your own schedule. Gateway Academy provides an alternative and flexible route to a high school diploma for students who have dropped out, or are at risk of dropping out of school.

The individualized, computer-based instruction offered at Gateway is available during flexible hours on weekdays and three weeknights. Students also can access the curriculum from anywhere through any computer that has Internet access.

“With the online curriculum, the high school never closes,” said Gateway Academy Program Director Troy Brock.

The scenario described above is one student’s reality and just one of many situations that Gateway’s faculty deals with every day. Like this real student, others at the school are dealing with hardships — pregnancy, sick parents, no parents and deaths in the family — while trying to complete high school.

“This student, like most of our students, would have never survived the normal track,” said teacher Dawn Coleman. “If she had not had us, she would not have a diploma today.”

Coleman and Brock believe the same can be said for the other 160 students who have graduated from the school since its inception in December 2001.

“These students are their own story of success in their life,” Brock said. “To get their diploma is a huge deal for them.”

Flexibility is key

The best path to graduation is different for every student, he explained. Most students adapt well to the regular classroom instruction track. Students at risk of dropping out of school need extra attention and often require a more flexible schedule, he said.

“That’s where Gateway has stepped in and is working to meet the needs of these students by addressing their individual needs and their learning issues,” Brock said.

There is no attendance policy at Gateway, but someone from the staff meets with each student to create a schedule that works around the students’ family and job responsibilities.

The staff keeps the students’ Individual Graduation Plans readily accessible in the classroom. A staff member meets with students monthly to check their progress.

Relationships make it work

“The human connection is the biggest key to success, especially with at-risk programs,” Brock said. “Some of these students have no one. Most are lacking healthy adult relationships. We start by building relationships with the students.”

Brock said there is truly a team effort among the four staff members of the school. Besides Brock and Coleman, Jessica Holloway, a paraeducator, and Jessica Dowdy, the school’s administrative assistant, work together to ensure student success.

Weekly meetings give the team time to discuss behaviors and individual student issues. “That’s been priceless,” Brock said. “Without that I can’t imagine the chaos that would ensue.”

The Gateway Academy is a joint venture of the Graves County and Mayfield Independent school districts and the West Kentucky Educational Cooperative.

“The administration has set no limits on us,” Brock said. “We’ve been given a lot of flexibility and trust to do what we believe is best for the students.”

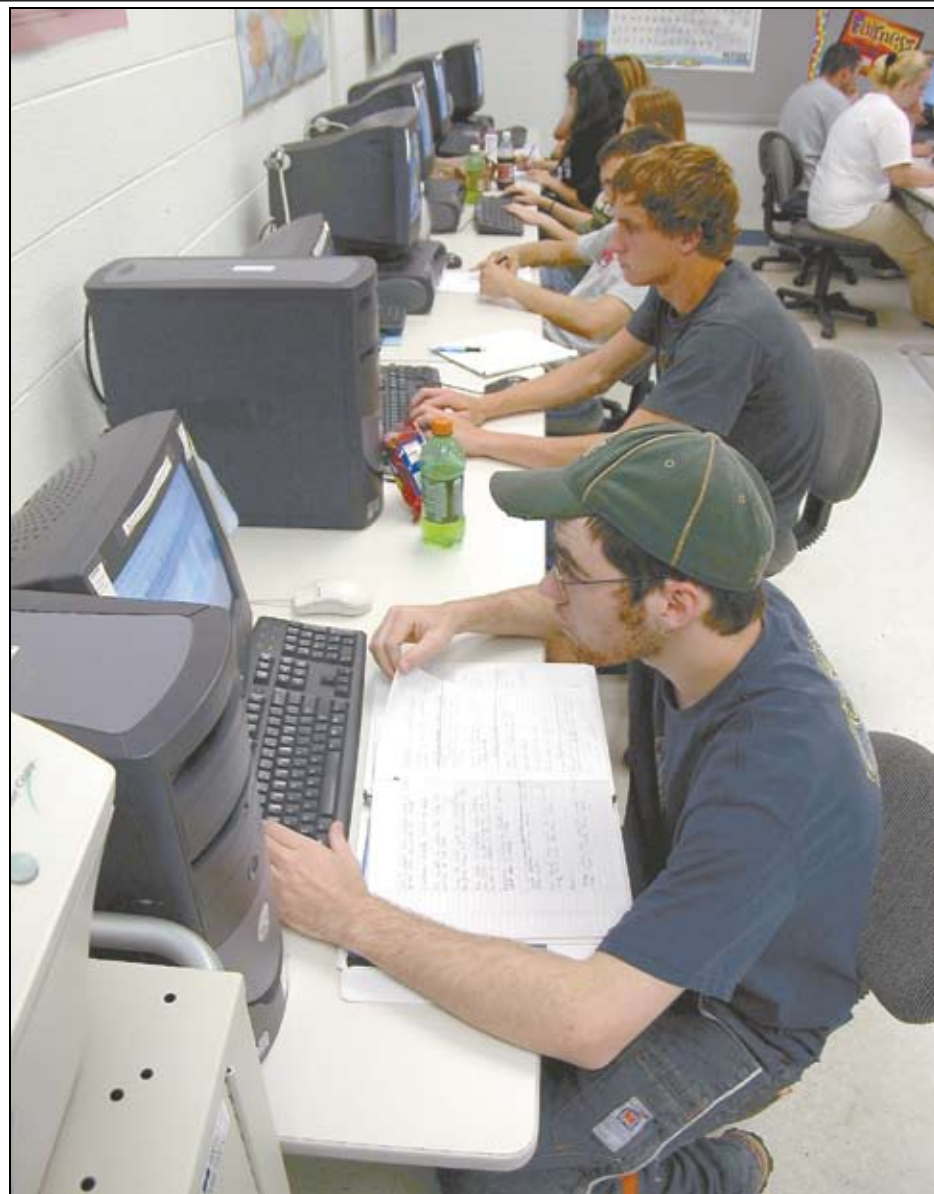


Photo by Rick McComb

Josh Dunham, foreground, uses his notes while working to complete an online assignment that will lead to fulfilling graduation requirements at Gateway Academy High School in Graves County.

With that sentiment in mind, the staff determines who can enroll in the school. The principal or guidance counselor from the sending school refers students currently enrolled in high school if they meet the referral criteria and assessment standards.

While most students are in their late teens and early twenties, several older students have returned to earn their diplomas. If an adult dropped out of school and is older than 20, he or she may apply directly to the Gateway Academy for evaluation.

“Once they get here, they lose all inhibitions. They’re just here to get it done,” said Brock. “We rarely have behavior issues. It makes my job easy as far as discipline. I can focus on instructional leadership.”

He believes the school must provide a maximum opportunity to learn. He said staff members push a curriculum of rigor and relevance. It’s important for students to see job-relevancy and connect learning in the classroom to what’s going on in the real world, he explained.

“We try to help students think not just in the moment,” Brock said, “but think about (the) future as long term.”

Other programs

Gateway Academy also houses a Kentucky Adult Education program and a secondary GED program. The in-school GED program began last year and allows at-risk students to receive aligned instruction, counseling services and access to a variety of instructional resources that are aligned to the students’ postsecondary goals.

Students receive individualized, small-group and large-group instruction with the Kentucky Educational Television curriculum, textbook curriculum and prescriptive reports.

“The teacher has a lot of options to do different things,” Brock said.

Students engage in school-to-work related experiences, cooperative education, career prep classes and mandatory technology literacy classes that offer college credit.

“This is not a dumping ground,” Brock said. “We look really hard to see if this is what is best for the student.”

Last year, 11 students took the GED exam. Ten of the students passed on the first try.

Every year, at the Gateway Academy graduation ceremony, students are given the opportunity to tell their stories. Coleman said it is always a special evening for the students, parents and staff because they know what odds each student has overcome.

“Gateway is not a last-chance school,” Brock said. “It is a next-chance school. It’s what school should have been like for these students originally.”

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Pike County

Pike County Central High School teachers can meet a wide range of student needs in one classroom

By Cathy Lindsey

cathy.lindsey@education.ky.gov

Technology is changing the process of teaching and learning in Kentucky. Teachers and administrators at Pike County Central High School say they realize the important role technology can play in helping guide teacher instruction and providing intervention for increased student learning. In fact, they are using a computerized testing system to drive instruction and increase individual student achievement.

"The computer is a wonderful motivator for today's technology generation," said Madonna Morley, the high school's media specialist. "Because of the individualization, students enjoy completing the assignments at their own pace with minimal direction from a teacher. Plus, teachers don't have to spend valuable instruction time planning and creating assignments because they are built into the program."

The software used at Pike County Central, the A+ program, is just one of many new technology tools available to assist Kentucky educators in individualizing instruction.

Teachers use the software program for diagnostic assessments of student learning throughout the year. They also use the testing system to supplement curriculum for gifted and talented students. It also provides a credit recovery resource for students who have fallen academically behind their peers.

A diagnostic tool

"The content comes directly from the Kentucky Core Content and the Program of Studies," said David Rowe, assistant principal at the high school. "Everything is linked."

Morley, who also is the school's A+ coordinator, explained, "When using it for placement purposes, those students in need of remediation can easily be identified and placed in special classes."

Last year, eleventh graders were tested in January to give teachers ideas on what strands needed to be covered. The reports generated by the program showed the specific concepts the students did not understand.

"Because you can assess how much your students know about Kentucky Core Content, this is a very powerful diagnostic tool to use to drive your instruction," Morley said. "By simply looking at a variety of reports, teachers know which concept they need to

be spending the most time teaching or reviewing."

Morley said that by giving a pre-test at the beginning of the school year, teachers can determine the current knowledge level of each student in a content area. This gives a starting point, she said.

"Teachers can then give a test midyear to determine what concepts need further instruction and which students need more attention," Morley said.

"This type of diagnostic assessment individualizes student learning," said Assistant Principal Rowe. "Now, we can efficiently serve remedial students and gifted and talented students in the same classroom."

Supplementing curriculum

Because of the assessment data, teachers can move students who demonstrate they have mastered the material being taught in class to the next learning level. Students who haven't mastered the material can receive extra reinforcement.

"Students using this program who show 80 percent mastery of a concept can move on to the next concept without having to wait for other students to catch on," Rowe said.

Eddie McCoy, Pike County Central High School principal, said the program also addresses the problem of the "wasted" senior year. "By offering performance-based credit, technology like this program will allow seniors to take advantage of more dual-credit courses, AP courses, internships and other learning opportunities that can help them better prepare for their future," he said.

"This is the best thing that has ever happened at this school," said Kayla Lowe, a student at Pike County Central High. "I can move at my own pace while others can review until they get it."

Credit recovery tool

Students in the school's Excel program use the software program for credit recovery. If a student starts falling behind in a class, he or she can enter the Excel program to get additional instruction.

"The flexibility and versatility of the program has allowed us to help determine the needs of the students," said Barry Birchfield, Excel teacher at Pike County Central. "When a student is struggling, we can intervene immediately."

For both the Excel program and the gifted and talented program, students take a pre-assessment test. The software program uses the test results to outline a lesson



Tyler Blair, foreground, and Kayla Blankenship work on diagnostic assessments in reading and language arts in one of four computer labs at Pike County Central High School. The assessments will help teachers meet the needs of individual students in their classes.

Photo by Rick McComb

plan for each student. It helps teachers determine the content and number of lessons the student needs to review.

The program tutorials consist of three sections. The study section allows students to review the material and concepts. The practice test gives the student sample questions. The mastery section is the test itself.

Students can only go through the study and practice sessions one time, so teachers encourage students to take notes and study before moving on to the next level. In the practice session, they can access the study information by clicking on a specific icon any time they miss a question. Once students move to the mastery test,

they cannot go back and review or move on until they reach the goal mastery percentage set by the teacher.

Students in the Excel program must show 60 percent mastery of the content to continue in that class, rather than being held back for a year.

"Our goal is to never let a student fail," McCoy said, "and through continuous reinforcement help them to accelerate to their fullest potential."

Currently, students use the A+ program in four computer labs. The flex lab also is used for tutoring after school and on Saturdays. Rowe said the school soon will provide laptops to take into classrooms and make the program

more easily accessible to every student.

"This is without a doubt the best tool we have for our students," said Principal McCoy. "There are so many uses for this program, we know we haven't even touched the tip of the iceberg on what we can do with it."

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Read & Discuss

'The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century'

Reviewed by Joy Barr

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What trends are shaping the future? How do they impact what students need to know and be able to do? What are the implications for students, schools and society if students are not prepared adequately for the changing world?

You don't need a crystal ball to know that the world in which we live is changing dramatically. However, Thomas L. Friedman's latest book, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* helps put into context the changes that we have seen in our professional careers and help us imagine how fast the changes will come for our students during their life's work.

Friedman's book has been a popular read among Kentucky educators for the past year. I recommend the book and believe it is important for educators to learn and understand that globalization can make the world a better place to live. The book is well-written and includes interesting stories and examples to illustrate the issues that Friedman emphasizes.

Friedman is an award-winning author who has won the Pulitzer Prize three times for his work at *The New York Times*. He tells readers that people who want to be successful in the future need to be "something more than vanilla ice cream." For Friedman, that means the American work force needs to be educated, highly skilled, and ready to learn and adapt to our changing world.

It means preparing students with the skills they need to help compete in the global marketplace. It means finding new ways to adapt to changes in the economy and ways that education can be more responsive to the increasing demands of a diverse student body.

Friedman refers to the world as "flat" in his book. He uses this term to describe the removal of barriers that have kept people around the globe from interacting or exchanging information with one another. An example of this might be a computer company in the United States that out-sources its technical support to a company in India.

According to the author, the developing nations in Asia and Eastern Europe place a premium on educating students to excel in industries that will drive the future global marketplace. While the number of scientists and engineers who graduate from Indian and Chinese universities is increasing, universities in this country are awarding fewer degrees in science and engineering every year — many of those degrees go to international students.

Postsecondary education in the U.S. continues to have excellent standing worldwide. However, increasing numbers of international students enrolled here are taking their diplomas and returning home to work. Some go home because they believe their quality of life will be better, and some because they cannot get visas to remain in this country.

According to Friedman, it is a high honor for a Chinese, Indian or Eastern European student to land a job in a science or technology field. American students, he says, go through the education system with the mindset that becoming an engineer is "not cool."

Not only must U.S. education restructure its standards to reflect relevant skills and knowledge for a global economy, it also must overcome a culture of apathy and complacency that is impeding serious reform.

China and India are churning out large

numbers of well-educated students armed with the skills that are necessary to compete in and drive an economy based on information and technology. In 2005, China produced 3.3 million college graduates, and India produced 3.1 million graduates who are fluent in English. In comparison, the U.S. graduated 1.3 million college students.

Currently, high schools across America are lagging behind their counterparts around the globe, according to Friedman's research. In science and mathematics, American high school students are not competitive with students in leading industrialized nations.

Friedman says there is a quiet crisis in the U.S. with science and technology that educators and government leaders have to wake up to. The U.S. is in a truly global environment that is driving competition. Countries throughout the world are not only wide awake, they are running a marathon while America is only running sprints, he said. If left unchecked, this could challenge America's pre-eminence and capacity to innovate.

The author writes that we must ensure that our high schools are producing young adults who are ready for the next step — college, technical training and work. Successful high schools have far-reaching effects

on our future economy and its global competitiveness. Friedman gives convincing arguments as to why our high schools need to graduate students who are ready to make positive contributions to the 21st century global economy.

Having an educated work force has never been as important as it is today. Kentucky's education leaders have emphasized that Kentucky public school educators cannot afford to sit around for another decade or two wondering if there is going to be a different world out there. That different world is upon us, and we must renew our efforts

to provide a world-class education for all Kentucky students.

Our students today are a good source of hope and our nation's most valuable resource. We must empower them to compete and excel in the global arena.

Kentucky teachers and administrators need the perspective of Friedman's book to be aware of how intentional Kentucky must be in its pursuit of a world-class

education for all students. Our schools must continue the work they have been given by education reform. However, our schools also must pick up the pace in preparing students with skills they need to compete in a global age.

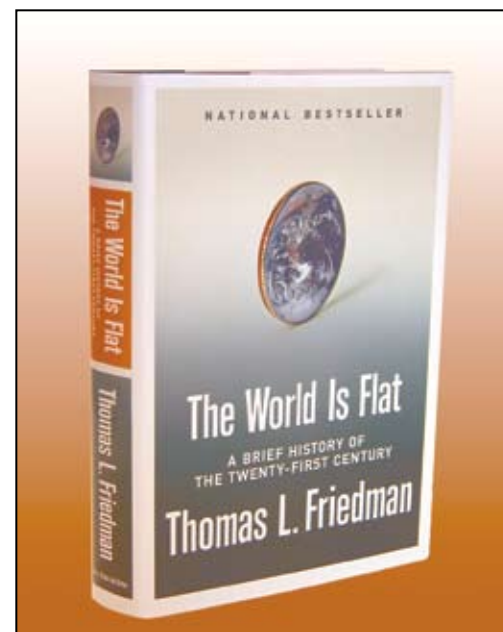


Photo by Rick McComb

By Thomas L. Friedman
Hardcover; 488 pages;
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005;
ISBN: 0374292884

Save 20 percent on books at Kentucky Book Fair

Young readers and pre-readers can't seem to get enough of Marcia Thornton Jones' Bailey School Kids adventures, Paul Brett Johnson's silly songs or Shutta Crum's read-aloud folktales. New titles by these and other favorite authors pop up as fast as children can devour them.

Teachers and library media specialists, of course, want to fan that enthusiasm for reading by keeping school library and classroom shelves stocked with new books as well as classic favorites. When budgets are tight, buying those books can be a challenge.

Good news! At this year's Kentucky Book Fair in Frankfort, educators can choose from hundreds of titles and buy their selections at a 20 percent discount. The discount will apply to purchases made with a district or library Pro Card or purchase order from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Nov. 11, (the day of the fair) or during an educators/librarians-only preview day (1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 9).

More than 140 authors will be at the

Frankfort Convention Center on Nov. 11 to meet readers and sign books in all genres for all ages and reading levels. Authors will not be onsite for the Nov. 9 preview day.

In addition to Jones, Johnson and Crum, four other writers of books for children, Nancy Kelly Allen, James and Freda Klotter, and George Ella Lyon have confirmed to attend. Updates to the roster of authors and titles, details about this year's Educators/Librarians Luncheon and information about special events celebrating the Kentucky Book Fair's 25th anniversary are available on the event's Web site.

Purchases at the annual fair generate funds for grants to public and school libraries and literacy programs throughout the state.

More info ...

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 www.kybookfair.com

Like to recommend a new resource?

Have you read a book or professional article, used new software or visited a Web site you'd like to recommend to other educators? If so, you can reach nearly 54,000 teachers, administrators and education stakeholders by submitting a review of the resource to *Kentucky Teacher* for publication.

To receive information on writing for our publication — content, article length and deadlines — contact us by e-mail at kyteacher@education.ky.gov or by postal mail at *Kentucky Teacher*, Kentucky Department of Education, 612 Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY 40601.

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ates a large à la carte program and catering service, which pours its profits directly back into other school programs. They serve an average of 12,000 hot, nutritious breakfast and lunch meals each school day in the district's 21 schools.

However, Thornton doesn't confine herself to her office and the lunchrooms. She is actively partnering with teachers to provide nutrition education programs for Hardin County's students, their parents and other residents in the community.

Studies show that well-nourished students are more prepared to learn, more likely to attend school and better able to take advantage of educational opportunities than those who are not well fed. As a result, Hardin County provides free breakfast meals to all elementary students.

"This is an investment for our kids," stated Thornton. "Developing healthy habits while young will last a lifetime."

This year, she's adding a new dimension to her work as president of the National School Nutrition Association.

Thornton enjoys working with different groups and in a variety of settings. "There is never a typical day in the school nutrition



Janey Thornton, director of school food service and nutrition for Hardin County Schools, shows the calories in a serving of popcorn chicken to Brandy Dailey, a freshman at John Hardin High School.

Photo by Rick McComb

business," said Thornton. One day she may be teaching district employees how to use new pieces of food service equipment and the next she may be working with an architect on designs for a new school kitchen.

Thornton works with local board members and keeps them apprised of new nutrition efforts in the schools and of new state requirements, such as Senate Bill 172, passed by the 2005 Kentucky General Assembly. This law requires school districts to annually assess nutrition and physical activity environments, report the results to parents and local school board members, and make recommendations to improve services.

She also works closely with the district's Family Resource and Youth Services Centers and the community cooperative exten-

sion service on programs to improve the health and well-being of students in Hardin County Schools.

Thornton works with parents, especially those with preschoolers. She supplies them with nutritional information they can use at home to provide meals and snacks that keep their children healthy and ready to learn at school. She often provides a nutritional analysis for children with special nutritional needs, such as food allergies, to help parents meet each child's dietary requirements.

In addition, she visits many classrooms — elementary, middle and high school — in Hardin County to work with teachers during lessons on healthy eating. Thornton helps students learn about healthy snacks, obesity and how good dietary habits will help create success in the classroom. She has even taught classes on manners and etiquette to help students be at ease in social situations.

As director of school food service and

nutrition, Thornton makes certain students receive the message of making wise food choices in a variety of ways. Many of the school cafeterias have colorful posters on the walls that depict foods being served, the food guide pyramid and tips for healthy eating. "This serves as a reminder of the importance of developing good nutritional habits," said Thornton.

Like others involved in school nutrition programs throughout the state, Thornton knows that good nutrition will help children achieve and succeed at high levels. And, she's working to make that happen — with every meal served in the 21 Hardin County schools.

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www.cspinet.org/new/200606201.
html — School Foods Report Card

Kentucky gets A- on School Foods Report Card

Kentucky has been recognized for its strong school nutrition policies. The School Foods Report Card, issued by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, gave Kentucky's school food policies an "A-."

Five states received B+s. Seven states received Bs or B-s; 15 states received Cs or Ds, and 23 states received Fs.

Kentucky's policy only allows vending machines and school stores to sell food on campus in the afternoon, a half-hour after the last lunch period. The policy also sets strong nutrition standards for

foods and drinks sold during the rest of the day in all schools. For foods, the report concludes that Kentucky set reasonable standards for portion sizes, saturated fat, sugars and sodium.

According to the report, Kentucky's school nutrition policy received "A-" rather than an "A" because of its weak beverage portion size standards, lack of limits of trans fat and a loophole for à la carte foods, which allows any item that is a part of a reimbursable meal to be sold à la carte.

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the grades tested through the KCCT by averaging 2005 and 2006 data for all student subpopulations of sufficient size, schools and districts.

While AYP is calculated for every public school, only those funded by the federal Title I program are subject to federal consequences if they do not make AYP in the same content area in any subgroup for two or more consecutive years. Subgroups in Kentucky are minority students, low-income students, students with disabilities and students with limited-English proficiency.

The federal Title I program provides funds to ensure that disadvantaged children receive opportunities for high-quality educational services. In Kentucky, 846 of the 1,187 schools that participated in the state's 2005-2006 assessment and accountability system were funded by Title I. All but two — Anchorage Independent and Beechwood Independent — of the 176 school districts that participated in the 2005-2006 assessments received some Title I funding.

Under NCLB, consequences increase from Tier 1 to Tier 5 each consecutive year that a school does not make AYP. These

range from notifying parents, implementing school choice and writing/revising school plans to implementing alternate governance of the school. Statewide, 68 Title I schools are in Tier 1 of consequences; 26 Title I schools are in Tier 2; 56 Title I schools are in Tier 3; 1 Title I school is in Tier 4; and 5 Title I schools are in Tier 5.

District results

School districts also are held to the requirements of AYP under the federal education law. Of Kentucky's 176 school districts in 2005-2006, 80 districts, or 45.5 percent, met 100 percent of their target goals. Overall, 144 of the 176 districts met 80 percent or more of their goals.

For NCLB requirements, school districts are gauged on the total student population. This can mean that, even if every school within a district makes AYP, the district may not because of the total size of subpopulations and their performance.

MORE INFO ...

www.education.ky.gov — Click on "KDE QuickLinks," scroll down to "NCLB Reports" and click.



Photo by Rick McComb

Setting the course

Greenville Elementary early primary teachers Holly Browning, left, and Angie Todd, right, work with Muhlenberg County Curriculum Specialist Penny Roberts to align their curriculum to Kentucky's newly revised Program of Studies during a professional development session late this summer. Though still in draft form until the changes are made through the state regulatory process, teachers throughout the state have been working for the past several months to align curriculum so this school year's lessons will be designed around the revised content standards.

BOARD from Page 1

prior to letting bids for a new contractor for the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). The revisions, which will be implemented in state tests this spring, will require the board to make adjustments to the accountability system. Department staff characterized the changes as potentially having an impact on the academic index, the nonacademic index and/or the norm-referenced test index.

Other policy issues that were raised included:

- How should ACT and other readiness exams be included in the accountability formula?
- Should all content areas maintain a similar emphasis in the accountability calculation?
- Should the percentage of the accountability index derived from reading and mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels increase due to annual testing in grades 3-8?
- Should ACT reading, mathematics and science items that align to Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment contribute to results in content areas?

No action was taken on these issues. The board will continue discussing these and other assessment and accountability policy questions at its Sept. 6 meeting.

In other business, the board approved amendments to the formula for determining school accountability that affected the 2006 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reporting. The implementation of these changes will ensure that Kentucky complies with the Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook approved by the U. S. Department of Education. (See story on Page 1.)

The board also voted to approve the fiscal year (FY) 2007 Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) expenditure plan for funds totaling \$28.5 million. The annual KETS Shared Services and Offers of Assistance provide supplemental services and funding to each district to implement, maintain and incrementally replace the technology required to enhance learning opportunities for students.

The School Facilities Construction Commission can provide a KETS Offer of Assis-

tance to a school district only after the Kentucky Board of Education approves the district's unmet need.

The annual unmet need for each district is determined by what each district reports it takes to minimally operate, maintain and incrementally upgrade existing investments while also acquiring new technology. The total of the annual unmet need reported by all districts is divided by the Average Daily Attendance to determine each district's unmet need.

While the board approved the unmet technology needs for school districts, each district must continue to secure alternative funding sources through federal funds and local grants beyond the KETS funds to fully fund the unmet need.

In other actions, the board approved a plan to divest surplus property at the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) in Danville. The board hopes this will provide better operating efficiency, reduced costs, better accommodation of instructional needs, increased income, reduced liabilities and improved security. House Bill 380 allows the proceeds from surplus property sales at KSD to be used for the benefit of programs and services at the school.

The board agreed to contact the Kentucky High School Athletic Association to encourage the group to re-evaluate its policies on sports practice during warm weather.

The board appointed Dennis E. Pearce of Fayette County to the State Textbook Commission and Brianna Adams, a teacher in Carter County, to the Writing Portfolio Advisory Committee.

The board also elected officers who will serve for the next 12 months. Keith Travis will serve as chair, and Bonnie Lash Freeman will serve as vice-chair.

The next meeting of the board will be Sept. 6 in Frankfort.

MORE INFO ...

www.education.ky.gov — Click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner. Scroll down to "State Board of Education" and click.



Photo by Rick McComb

Getting safety instructions

Clayton Judd, a school bus driver for 12 years with Metcalfe County Schools, goes over safety tips with Edmonton Elementary sixth grader Whitney Coomer at the start of the school year. Because the most dangerous part of a school bus ride is getting on and off the bus, the theme for this year's School Bus Safety Week, Oct. 10-15, is "Be Aware — Cross with Care" to remind students, their parents and motorists to be cautious when students are crossing streets to board or get off a school bus.

Report on youth behavior risk released

"The Kentucky Youth Behavior Risk Report: 1997-2003 Trends and 2004 Baseline Data" offered mixed news about Kentucky children's health behaviors. The report, released this summer, summarizes data on behavior trends among students in grades 6-12 from a survey gathered through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Kentucky youth made significant improvement in reducing unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, riding with someone who had been drinking, drinking and driving, monthly use of marijuana, carrying weapons and inhalant use.

However, Kentucky has the highest rate of high school obesity among the 44 states and 23 cities participating in the survey and is among the five states with the highest percentage of high school students at risk of becoming overweight. Kentucky students also are less likely to have diets rich in vegetables, fruits, and 100 percent fruit juices

than both neighboring benchmark states and the U.S. as a whole.

Kentucky students are also the least likely in the nation to be in a physical education class at school. Only one in four, or 25 percent, of Kentucky high school students are in a physical education class compared to the national median of one in two, or 49 percent.

The 1997 through 2003 data are examined for trends in high school students' behaviors that affect health such as nutrition, physical activity, smoking, vehicle safety, sexual behavior, suicide and illegal drug use. The fall 2004 data set a new baseline for future trend studies and represent the latest data available.

The report can be viewed online at the University of Kentucky Center for Prevention Research's Web site at www.uky.edu/RGS/PreventionResearch. Click on "Reports and Data."



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Kentucky Teacher wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

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612 Capital Plaza Tower
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Frankfort, KY 40601

Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr
joy.barr@education.ky.gov

Open records/meetings laws affect local boards and councils meetings

Kentucky's laws on open records and open meetings affect every public official and every public agency, including school districts. The Kentucky Office of the Attorney General helps local school officials navigate the requirements of those laws.

The Open Meetings Act establishes the public's right of access to public meetings, which include local school board and school council meetings. The law requires that all gatherings of a quorum of the members of a public agency where public business is discussed or action is taken must be public meetings. Members of the public may attend those meetings and cannot be required to identify themselves to attend.

The Open Records Act establishes the public's right of access to public records, which include documents, recordings, photographs, diskettes or other records that are prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public agency. All public records, no matter their medium, must be open for inspection unless they are exempted by statute.

The Kentucky Office of the Attorney General has developed a Web site (www.ag.ky.gov/oromalert) with information about open records and open meetings, along with explanations of the responsibilities of public officials in those matters. This site provides details and resources for all public officials — including those in local school districts — to help them prepare for any legal questions that may arise.

Contact: Amye Bensenhaver in the Office of the Attorney General, (502) 696-5664, amyebensenhaver@ag.ky.gov

Helm and Rasche receive Robinson Award

The Kentucky Board of Education in August presented the third annual Dr. Samuel Robinson Award to Marlene Helm and state Rep. Frank Rasche.

Helm has served as interim dean of the Eastern Kentucky University College of Education and as interim superintendent of Fayette County Schools. From 1999 to 2003, she was secretary of the Kentucky Education, Arts and Humanities Cabinet.

Rasche represents the third district, comprised of McCracken County, in the Kentucky House of Representatives. He is co-chair of the Interim Joint Committee on Education, a member of the Budget Review Committee, the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee and the House Judiciary Committee.

The state board established the award to honor retired board member Samuel Robinson and to celebrate the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision. The annual award is conferred on an individual or



Photo by Rick McComb

Roundtable discussions about improvement

Jan Stone, a Highly Skilled Educator (HSE), gestures as she answers a question from another cadre member during a mini-workshop she was leading about Scholastic Audit recommendations. The HSE cadre met in late July in preparation of the fall release of Commonwealth Accountability Testing System school results. The HSEs also read Robert Barr's book Saving our Schools, Saving our Children and met with the author during the weeklong professional development session to discuss closing the achievement gap challenges. Barr is nationally recognized for his research on at-risk students, teacher education and alternative schools.

organization in Kentucky demonstrating outstanding commitment, service and leadership in promoting opportunities for all Kentucky students at high levels.

Seven elementary schools pilot leadership program

Seven Kentucky schools will participate in a three-year pilot project designed to help school principals focus their attention on curriculum, instruction and assessment and spend less time on daily management issues.

The pilot is directed by the State Action Education Leadership Project (SAELP) and funded by the Wallace Foundation. Principals in the seven schools will learn how to be certified instructional leaders and will work with teachers on instruction and student achievement, which should improve relationships with the instructional staff and lead to increased achievement. School Administrative Managers, also district employees, will handle the school management tasks instead of the principals.

The seven schools participating are: Athens-Chilesburg Elementary, James Lane Allen Elementary and Millcreek Elementary (Fayette County); Wingo Elementary (Graves County); Abraham Lincoln Elementary and Hodgenville Elementary (LaRue County); and Mullins Elementary (Pike County).

School nutrition policy is strongest in nation

Kentucky has the strongest school nutrition policy in the nation, according to the School Foods Report Card issued by the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

The nonprofit consumer advocacy group conducts research and advocacy programs in health and nutrition.

The organization evaluated school nutrition standards for foods and drinks sold in lunchrooms, vending machines and at school fundraisers. The organization also looked at whether schools limited the availability of foods and drinks by restricting their locations and sale hours.

Kentucky's policies were given an A-. The state allows vending machines to sell foods only in the afternoon, a half-hour after the last lunch period. The state also makes healthy drinks available, such as one percent or fat-free milk, water, pure fruit or vegetable juice. Kentucky also has set "reasonable standards" for food portion sizes, saturated fat, sugars and sodium, the report said.

The state received an A- rather than an A because of its "weak beverage portion size standards" and a "lack of limits on trans fat," the report said.

http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/school_foods_report_card.pdf

'Diplomas Count' reports on graduation rates

"Diplomas Count," the first in a new annual series from *Education Week*, finds large gaps in graduation rates across racial and ethnic groups, and by gender. The report provides detailed data on graduation rates for the 2002-2003 school year, the most recent data available, for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and in the nation's 50 largest school districts.

Graduation rates were calculated by the EPE Research Center using the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) method. The report found that graduation rates vary widely across the nation's largest districts, from a high of 82.5 percent in Fairfax County, Va., the nation's 14th largest district, to a low of 21.7 percent in the Detroit Public Schools, the nation's 11th largest district.

Public schools on par with private schools

In a report released by the U.S. Department of Education, data showed that students in public schools generally did as well as or better than comparable students in private schools.

The report compared public and private schools in terms of student achievement as measured by National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) federal mathematics and reading tests. It examined test scores of 700,000 fourth and eighth graders at public schools and those of 25,000 private school students.

The private schools appeared to have an achievement advantage when the raw scores of students were considered alone. But those perceived advantages disappeared when the researchers took into account variables like race, gender and parents' education and income.

The report concluded that when students of like economic, racial and family backgrounds were compared, public school students did as well as or better than those in fourth-grade reading and mathematics and in eighth-grade mathematics. The exception was eighth-grade reading, in which private school students did better.

<http://165.224.221.98/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2006461.asp>

New program gives students INSIGHT to college

By Faun S. Fishback

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Seven students from across Kentucky got to give college life a trial run this summer at Morehead State University. These blind and visually impaired high school students — from Greenup County, Lyon County and several points in between — participated in a pilot program called INSIGHT. The week-long program exposed them to some of the challenges they might encounter in postsecondary education.

INSIGHT provided a power-packed week of activities and “classes” designed to heighten the students’ awareness of skills they would need to survive the college environment. Students learned to navigate their new surroundings during orientation and mobility training.

They also got a taste of independent living by staying in the dorms, using campus vending machines and doing their own laundry.

In addition, each student went through a simulated scheduling session with a college professor to discuss classes. They met with the campus disability coordinator to learn about available accommodation services and visited the campus library to discover services there. They also learned about what they need to do while

in high school to prepare for college admission and to apply for scholarships.

Sessions with Pamela Howard, Kentucky School for the Blind’s Big East regional consultant, and Stephanie Edmond, a Fleming County teacher of the visually impaired allowed students to discuss study habits, time manage-

gated unfamiliar surroundings on the university campus.

They also met with a panel of current and recently graduated college students who are blind or visually impaired to hear their personal experiences. And, they got to try out laptop computers with appropriate-access technology for class work as well as



Photos by Rick McComb

Emily Hurd, a senior at Fleming County High School, uses a screen reader adaptation to hear information as she surfs the Morehead State University Web site during an INSIGHT training session.

ment and other skills they will need to be successful in college classes. They talked about working with readers and scribes as well as living with a roommate.

Orientation and mobility interns from the University of Louisville and Tim Nelson, Kentucky Office for the Blind orientation and mobility specialist, helped the students gain new skills as they navi-

getting information about other access technology that might be available to them.

It wasn’t all work, however. Students had opportunities to participate in a variety of social and recreational activities — from a campus cookout to listening to off-campus entertainment at a local coffee house.

At the end of the week, the INSIGHT leaders provided parents with a brief review of observations for each student and suggestions that will be incorporated into their existing Individual Learning Plans at their schools.

Students agreed that INSIGHT was a success, and program planners are preparing to continue the program next summer. “I will use (the new information) to better advocate for myself for college and use the knowledge to be as independent as possible,” said one student.

Cathy Johnson,



Brett Morton, a senior at Kentucky School for the Blind, becomes familiar with getting to and from buildings on the Morehead State University campus during orientation and mobility training that was part of INSIGHT.



Bret Dahmke, a junior at Kentucky School for the Blind, searches the Internet using a laptop with access technology.

director of Outreach Services for the Kentucky School for the Blind, says the staff already is making plans for next summer’s INSIGHT session. Teachers and administrators who would like to have blind or visually impaired students participate can contact her for more information.

The weeklong program was a partnership of the Kentucky School for the Blind, Kentucky

Office of the Blind, Big East Educational Cooperative, Morehead State University and the University of Louisville.

More info . . .

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